



## Three-Day-a-Week Services?

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, January 19, 2009

Last week, Mayor Reed held his State of the City Address. And I think the mayor was forthright by clearly stating that the City of San Jose has a large deficit, and that cuts to services and layoffs are before us. In fact, I believe that the current \$60-65 million budget deficit will worsen and grow to \$70-75 million.

Just look at what is happening. Consumer spending is down, which affects sales tax revenues. Fewer properties are selling, which affects the conveyance tax. And property values are plummeting, which will affect property tax revenues for the next two or three years.

The deficit is larger than the entire Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services budget and more than twice the library budget.

Last week, I attended the library commission where the impact of the budget deficit was discussed. All departments except public safety are being asked to find 22 percent of their budgets to cut. For the library, this means \$5.3 million out of an approximate \$28 million budget.

One idea that was raised at the meeting and quickly approved by the library commission is to double the fine for late books and videos. The fines would go from 25 cents a day to 50 cents a day and the maximum fine would increase to \$20. This could raise \$800,000. (Assuming library patrons do not change their behavior and still return their books late. Inevitably, if a fee or fine is increased it will change behavior and thus less fines may occur.)

Nonetheless, even with this fee increase, it still leaves the Library Director \$4.5 million to cut.

Last year, the library spent around \$3.5 million on books, magazines, and videos (of which \$500,000 is spent on non-English items). The materials budget fluctuates each year based on revenue that is dependent on you and I buying and selling homes and a parcel tax on homeowners.

If the City no longer bought books, we would still be \$1 million short. And this option would not even close the gap, since the money for books is somewhat restricted and cannot be spent on personnel or other things besides materials.

The other option on the table is to reduce hours—actually, reduce days—for the neighborhood branch libraries. The thought is to have those libraries open only three days a week, with the various branch libraries rotating days. For example, the Almaden library would be open Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and closed the rest of the week. Then the Cambrian Library would be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Today our neighborhood branch libraries are open 5.5 days a week. Incidentally, they have seen increasing book circulation, and more residents using the computer services as unemployment rises.

Please note that the three city-owned golf courses have not cut their hours, and are open all week in case you want to take your kids there to do their homework or read their library books.

This is just one example of how you may be affected starting in July when the council adopts a budget in June.

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